



# SENATOR TROY FRASER

## CAPITOL UPDATE

*Two Thousand Thirteen*



The Senate of the State of Texas

Senator Troy Fraser

District 24



*Dear Fellow Texan:*

*After the severe drought of 2011, I focused my efforts toward ensuring the state had an abundant supply of water for the next 50 years. I traveled across Texas meeting with state and local leaders on ways to enhance existing water resources. As I started the 83rd Legislative Session, I took what I learned and was successful in enacting legislation to meet that goal.*

*As Chairman of the Senate Natural Resources Committee, I authored and passed HB 4 to set up the structure to provide meaningful financing for water providers across the state. This bill moves Texas forward in funding the state's water needs. I have been privileged to author many pieces of landmark legislation, but funding the State Water Plan is probably my most important achievement.*

*An important component to the success of HB 4 is the transfer of \$2 billion from the Economic Stabilization Fund to the newly created State Water Infrastructure Fund of Texas. The transfer will be decided on by Texans in the November 2013 constitutional amendment election.*

*Texas remains the best place in America to do business. Our decisions to maintain a low tax, low regulation environment have helped our state thrive over the past five years. We continue to be the fastest growing state in the nation with more than 1,000 people moving here every day.*

*This session the Texas Legislature worked hard to keep Texas' economy healthy and create an environment for employers and families to succeed. We passed a state budget that cuts \$1.3 billion in taxes, keeps spending below the rate of population and inflation growth, and funds our priorities to keep Texas the best place in the nation to live and work.*

*Overall I was pleased with what we accomplished during the 83rd Legislative Session. During the interim I will continue my work to stop the federal government's attempted regulatory takeover. Our state doesn't need the current presidential administration telling us what to do. Texans know what is best for Texas. We have made and will continue to make positive changes that don't overburden our residents and businesses.*

*I encourage each of you to contact me in the months ahead. Your thoughts and concerns--as well as your legislative suggestions--are important to me as I work during the interim.*

*Thank you for allowing me to continue to represent you in the Texas Senate. As always, I am honored to serve the people of Senate District 24. I will continue to spend time in the district in the months ahead, visiting with as many of you as I can. Hopefully, I'll see you soon.*

*Sincerely,*

Troy Fraser

C A P I T O L U P D A T E

# WATER UPDATE 2013

Senator Fraser authored HB 4 which creates the structure to provide financing to water providers across the state. The State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) is a water infrastructure bank that will revolve funds, so that over time—if properly capitalized—it can finance all the strategies included in the 2012 State Water Plan.

The Texas Legislature had the foresight to create the State Water Plan in 1957 after a long drought. With changes made in 1997, a new water planning process was established that relies on local and regional decision makers to develop regional water plans. The bottom-up approach to water planning allows the state to determine its water needs by giving local communities a direct input in the process.

In addition to the creation of new water infrastructure, the State Water Plan also focuses on reducing water use through conservation, reusing treated wastewater from homes and businesses, and converting salt and brackish water to freshwater (desalination).



*Governor Perry signs HB 4 into law as bill authors Senator Fraser and Representative Ritter look on.*

HB 4 restructures the Texas Water Development Board to a three member full time board; sets out the oversight and management of the SWIFT; directs local regions and the Water Development Board to prioritize water projects; enhances the state's bonding capability from existing constitutionally created programs and revenue bond programs; encourages innovative technologies such as water reuse and desalination; and recognizes the importance of conservation use—while providing that a percentage of the seed money must be directed toward our rural communities.

“The drought not only has an impact on the health and safety of our communities but it also affects our State's economy and the ability to attract new businesses,” stated Fraser. “I can think of no better legacy than to have developed a mechanism

to fund the State Water Plan so that our children, our grandchildren and future generations will have the water they need to prosper.”

In addition to working to fund the State Water Plan, Senator Fraser authored legislation that would help communities have the resources to better manage their water.

In some instances when a retail public utility experiences a significant water loss, the utility's customers are not notified of the loss. HB 1461 seeks to address this issue by requiring notification in order to assist the state in water conservation.

HB 2615 would strengthen the law that requires a water rights holder to submit an annual water use report to the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ). Currently, only 60 percent of water rights holders outside of water master areas report their annual water use each year. Having this data is essential to the effective administration of water rights by TCEQ because the information is used for various purposes in the administration of water rights, including responses to priority calls during a drought.

HB 2362 would require the Legislative Budget Board to perform an efficiency review of river authorities including the Lower Colorado River Authority and the Brazos River Authority. This review would include an analysis of the effectiveness and efficiency of the policies, management, fiscal affairs and operations. “I have been concerned about the lack of oversight of river authorities for over 15 years,” Fraser said. “It is time that we ensure that they are managing their organizations in the most fiscally prudent way so we can safeguard our water resources.”



*Senators Fraser & Birdwell discuss the passage of HB 2362.*



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE 2013

## Education

This session the Texas Legislature was able to provide more money for public schools, less state-mandated testing for students and an expansion of Texas' independent charter schools.

The state budget for 2014-15 includes an additional \$3.4 billion in basic per-student funding for public schools over the next two years. The Legislative Budget Board predicts that school districts will receive an increase per pupil of just over \$100 — about 2 percent — since the 2010-11 school year. Statewide, districts will get basic funding of \$5,809 per pupil next year, up from \$5,705 in 2010-11. The Legislature also updated some formulas to steer more dollars to property-poor districts to resolve the argument that the school finance system is inequitable.



*Senator Fraser greets history students from Salado ISD touring the State Capitol in May.*

The Texas Legislature passed HB 5 to change the standardized testing protocol for students by reducing the number of end-of-course exams needed to graduate from high school from 15 to five. Also, HB 5 revised the 4x4 graduation plan so that students have more flexible options so they can take workforce, career or college-relevant specialty courses, such as business and industry or STEM (science, technology, engineering and math).

"I supported HB 5 because the changes are responsive to concerns expressed by parents, educators and industry," said Fraser. "It gives students greater choices in their degree plan and removes the over-emphasis on testing to allow our educators to teach instead of test."

For the first time since 1995 the state cap on charters will be lifted, permitting charter school contracts to increase by 15 a year to 305 by 2019. The Legislature shifted oversight of charters to the Texas Education Agency and gave the agency greater authority to crack down on low-performing charters.

The Texas Legislature was able to enact meaningful reform put together by compromise. Participation by many diverse voices - parents, educators, industry - paid off.

## District Legislation

During the 83rd Regular Session, Senator Fraser focused on passing legislation to positively impact constituents throughout Senate District 24.

As a result of a request from the Military Child Education Coalition, Senator Fraser passed HB 525 to track military students to be counted and recorded in the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). "This data will help us monitor critical elements of education success for military-connected children including academic progress and proficiency, special and advanced program participation, and mobility and dropout rates," stated Fraser.

Also this session, Senator Fraser worked to pass HB 1427 to allow the City of Temple to identify and dispose of certain unmarketable surplus property outside of the normal property disposition process. These properties are considered an actual liability for the city, as it is forced to spend several thousand dollars a year maintaining these non-beneficial properties. By granting this authority, the city could return these properties to the tax rolls and thus create a more beneficial use for these properties.

The Texas Legislature passed HB 3332 by Senator Fraser to allow Brown County to petition for annexation into Ranger College's taxing district. "This bill was a cooperative ef-

fort between TSTC, Ranger College and Brown County to enrich the area's access to higher education," said Fraser. "It is important that we give communities access to higher education opportunities."

After an interim review by the Senate Committee on Natural Resources, the Texas Legislature enacted SB 567 to overhaul the state's oversight of investor-owned water and sewer utilities by transferring authority to regulate rates from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to the Public Utility Commission of Texas. "Transferring these functions to the PUC is beneficial to my constituents," Fraser stated. "This bill will ensure that the Office of Public Utility Counsel will help residential and small commercial customers navigate complex water rate cases."



*Senators Nichols and Fraser discuss the details of legislation to overhaul water and sewer utilities.*

# CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT ELECTION

*During the regular session, the Texas Legislature passed 10 joint resolutions proposing to amend the Texas Constitution. The constitutional amendment election will be November 5, 2013. The Texas Constitution, enacted in 1876, has been amended more than 400 times. For more information on these ballot propositions visit [http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/const\\_amends.htm](http://www.tlc.state.tx.us/const_amends.htm)*

**Proposition 1 (HJR 62)** would allow the legislature to provide an exemption to the surviving spouse of a member of the armed services who was killed in action for all or part of the appraised value of the surviving spouse's residence homestead. To qualify, the spouse must not have remarried since the death of the member of the armed services. The proposition also allows the legislature to entitle a surviving spouse who subsequently qualifies a different property as their homestead to a property tax exemption in an amount equal to the dollar amount of the exemption for the former homestead.

**Proposition 2 (HJR 79)** would remove provisions for the State Medical Education Board and the State Medical Education Fund from the Texas Constitution. The Board, originally intended to facilitate medical care in rural and medically underserved areas, has not made a loan in more than 25 years. The Board currently receives no funding and has no appointees. The functions originally intended for the Board and the Fund are now handled through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

**Proposition 3 (HJR 133)** would authorize a political subdivision to extend the number of days that aircraft parts are exempt from ad valorem taxation. Currently, the Constitution allows an ad valorem taxation exemption for property (including goods, merchandise, and other tangible personal property) that is located in Texas temporarily. To be eligible, the property must be acquired or imported to Texas for export and then detained for assembly, manufacturing, processing, or fabrication and shipped out of Texas no later than 175 days after the property was acquired or imported. The proposed amendment would extend the ad valorem taxation exemption for aircraft parts to 730 days from acquisition or importation.

**Proposition 4 (HJR 24)** would authorize the legislature to provide for an exemption from ad valorem taxation a percentage of the market value of a residence homestead of a disabled veteran or surviving spouse equal to the veteran's percentage of disability if the homestead was donated by a charitable organization at no cost to the veteran. The Texas Constitution currently allows the legislature to exempt from ad valorem taxation all or part of the market value of the residence homestead of a disabled veteran; this proposal extends that authority to include homesteads donated by charitable organizations.

**Proposition 5 (SJR 18)** would amend the Texas Constitution to authorize reverse mortgages for purchase of a homestead property, which are currently not expressly permitted in the Texas Constitution. The process allows homeowners, age 62 or older, to utilize a Federal Housing Administration-insured reverse mortgage to finance the acquisition of a new home. The amendment would also require the prospective borrower and spouse to participate in counseling before closing and requires the borrower to be issued a disclosure twelve days before closing.

**Proposition 6 (SJR 1)** would create the State Water Implementation Fund for Texas (SWIFT) and the State Water Implementation Revenue Fund for Texas (SWIRFT). The funds, to be administered by the Texas Water Development Board, would be used to implement the state water plan with oversight by the Legislative Budget Board.

**Proposition 7 (HJR 87)** would allow a home-rule municipality (a municipality with a population of 5,000 or more and an adopted home-rule charter) to specify in its charter the procedure to fill a vacancy in city government that had an unexpired term of 24 months or less. The Constitution currently requires municipalities to fill vacancies in city government by holding a special election to fill the seat within 120 days.

**Proposition 8 (HJR 147/SJR 54)** would repeal the language in the Texas Constitution which authorized the creation of a hospital district in Hidalgo County by allowing a maximum tax rate of 10 cents per \$100 valuation of taxable property for the hospital district. Though the proposal would remove language in the Constitution relating to the Hidalgo County hospital district, the formation of a hospital district in Hidalgo County and the district's tax rates would still require approval from the county's voters.

**Proposition 9 (SJR 42)** would allow the State Commission on Judicial Conduct, after a formal proceeding, to issue an order of public admonition, warning, reprimand, censure, or requirement that the judge or justice obtain additional training or education. The constitutional amendment, if the proposition passes, would take effect January 1, 2014 and would apply to only to formal proceedings commenced on or after that date.



## Texas Treasure Business Award Program

Created in 2005, the Texas Treasure Business Award Program recognizes the accomplishments of Texas businesses that have provided employment opportunities and support to the state's economy for at least 50 years. The program pays tribute to the state's well-established businesses and their exceptional historical contributions toward the state's economic growth and prosperity. Businesses that establish that they have been continuously owned by the same family or have operated continuously from a building that is at least 50 years old and have maintained its architectural integrity will receive additional recognition.

*Senator Fraser and Representative Isaac congratulate Strickland Drug's owners and employees on the Texas Treasure Business Award.*



# DISTRICT UPDATE 2013

*Senate District 24 is a very diverse district covering 15 whole and 2 partial counties with over 800,000 residents both rural and urban. Industry in the district includes agriculture, manufacturing and retail. The district encompasses two major military installations – Fort Hood based in Bell County and Dyess Air Force Base in Taylor County.*

*Senator Fraser spent much of the legislative session visiting and meeting with constituents. He believed it was important to hear their concerns as the Senate debated the major issues.*



***The Temple High School Choir performed in the Capitol Rotunda on March 5, 2013.***



***Girl Scouts Troop 85 from Marble Falls tours the Capitol during the session.***



***Senator Fraser discusses legislative issues with the Kerr County Leadership Group during session.***



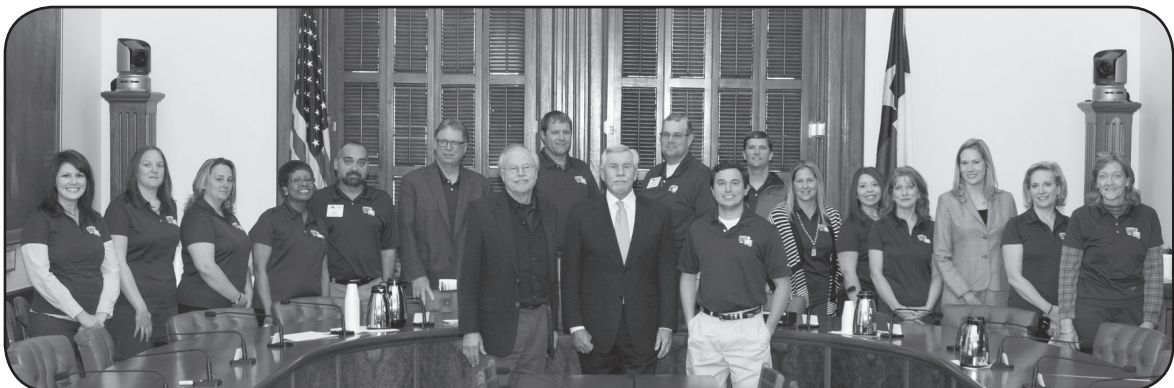
***Senator Fraser welcomes the Harker Heights Leadership Group to the State Capitol.***



***A delegation from Burnet County visited the Capitol on May 9, 2013.***



***Students from the University of Mary Hardin Baylor visit the Capitol to discuss issues.***



***The Gillespie County Leadership Group visits the State Capitol to see the legislative process.***

LISTING OF HELPFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Abuse Hotline (children, elderly, disabled).....	800-252-5400
Children’s Health Insurance (CHIP) .....	800-647-6558
Child Support Enforcement.....	800-252-8014
Consumer Protection (Attorney General) .....	800-621-0508
Consumer Credit Helpline.....	800-538-1579
Crime Victims Compensation .....	800-983-9933
Crime Stoppers.....	800-252-8477
Emergency Roadside Assistance.....	800-525-5555
Governor’s Information & Referral Hotline .....	800-843-5789
Injured Employees .....	800-252-7031
Texas Department of Insurance Helpline .....	800-252-3439
Lawyer Referral Service .....	800-252-9690
Missing Persons Clearinghouse .....	800-346-3243
Medicaid Hotline .....	800-252-8263
Runaway Hotline .....	888-580-4357
Student Financial Aid .....	800-445-4723
Taxpayer Information .....	800-252-5555
Unemployment Insurance Hotline.....	800-558-8321
Voter Registration/ Elections .....	800-252-8683
Youth Hotline.....	800-989-6884

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